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P.5

10/14/13

AP English Language

6. It’s more difficult to forgive yourself if the person you have hurt doesn’t forgive you.

I’ve contemplated this question for quite some time thinking as to whether or not it really is more difficult to forgive yourself if other people don’t. I think it all depends on how you carry yourself and how highly you think of yourself. It seems more selfish for someone to say they don’t care about the people they hurt, as long as they forgive themselves, but is it really selfish? Why is it hard for people to see others who are genuinely happy with themselves and their decisions? Because we tell ourselves when we’re little that we have to be selfless, we have to be aware of other people’s emotions so that we don’t hurt them. The key to forgiving yourself is realizing your self-worth, and knowing who you are as a person. If you’re generally happy with who you are, and realize not everyone is perfect it becomes easier for you to forgive yourself when you make mistakes. This is because you realize that the average person makes mistakes in their daily lives, but for some reason when mistakes involve other people and the ones we love it becomes more difficult to forgive ourselves. Why is that? When we love people, and hold them in a high regard, to see them crumble and cry because of the horrible actions that we’ve taken takes a toll on us. It becomes more difficult to forgive ourselves when theirs a second party involved, because not only have you done something to hurt yourself but you’ve managed to hurt someone else in the process. It’s as if the mask of perfection you’ve strived to hide yourself under has been taken off, and all your mistakes and imperfections have slowly come out to play with those you’ve worked so hard to hide them from. And as children we’re taught to be aware of others emotions, so to know that we’ve completely disregarded this becomes tough on our conscious. The question at hand has been explored in a variety of literature; it is exactly the premise for Edgar Allen Poe’s short story *William Wilson*. Poe afflicts a very melancholic and sorrowful tone onto the protagonist William Wilson in order to persuade his readers into feeling some ounce of remorse for his character. From the very start Wilson states to the reader that he is in fact evil, and the story is to describe the path that got him there. In general the character of William Wilson, holds himself in a very low regard and sees no good in himself what so ever which tends to be very self destructive. His feelings towards himself cause him to lead to alcoholism, cheating and his biggest regret that led him to his downfall. From the very beginning of the story the reader is meant to see no hope for William Wilson. I mean why would we? He’s sad, bitter, and basically begs the audience for forgiveness. This brings us back to our essential question of whether or not it is easier to forgive yourself if others do. William Wilson basically thinks nothing of himself and he says that he hopes the audience can find pity in him to lessen the shame of his guilt. If we analyze the overall characteristics in Wilson he at no point shows nay ambition to be a better person. As opposed to listening to his conscious and following it’s advice he wallows in self pity and blames his negative energy, poor temper, and evil sadistic ways on his genetics. Wilson could have very easily decided to hang out with a better group of people and get his act together. As opposed to doing this he wants everyone around him to forgive him instead of bettering himself as a person. Back to the main point, I think in general it’s easier for people to think lowly of themselves when we do something wrong which is a natural inborn instinct because we know the act is wrong. But when we know that our actions are forgivable by other people and they tell us its okay to be happy then we feel as if things are starting to turn up and if other people can accept who we are, then why can’t we ourselves?